

**The American Veteran
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Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi

Interviewer, Jim Benson: AFTER FOUR YEARS AS SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ANTHONY J. STEPPED DOWN FROM HIS POST.

THE NAVAL ACADEMY GRADUATE AND DECORATED COMBAT VETERAN HAS DEDICATED MUCH OF HIS CAREER TO SERVING AMERICA'S VETERANS. HE RECENTLY SHARED THESE THOUGHTS.

PRINCIPI: THE MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM TODAY ARE THE BEST THIS NATION HAS EVER FIELDDED AND THAT'S SAYING QUITE A BIT BECAUSE WE'VE FIELDDED SOME OF THE BEST THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY -- FROM THE RAG-TAG REVOLUTIONARIES WHO WON OUR INDEPENDENCE TO WORLD WAR TWO AND KOREA AND VIETNAM.

I'M ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED THIS IS NOT MY FATHER'S VA, AFTER WORLD WAR TWO. THIS VA IS JUST ABSOLUTELY WORLD CLASS. I MEAN, REALLY WORLD CLASS. THAT'S NOT ABOUT ME.

IT'S ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF THE VA WHO BRING IT TO LIFE.

>> THE PEOPLE IN THE FIELD AND ON THE FRONT LINES AND THE WAITING ROOMS AND THE REGIONAL OFFICES UNDERSTAND THAT TOO.

WHEN I GO UP TO WALTER REED AND BETHESDA, YOU LOOK AT SOME OF THOSE KIDS WHO ARE PRETTY BANGED UP, REALLY BANGED UP. NO LEGS, NO ARMS, 18 YEARS OLD, SOME NOT EVEN UNITED STATES CITIZENS, SOME BARELY OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.

THAT'S ALL THE INSPIRATION I NEED.

SO IT'S PRETTY IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE'RE ON THE CUTTING EDGE, WE'RE ON THE LEADING EDGE, WE'RE COMPASSIONATE, WE'RE CARING.

WE'RE GOOD STEWARDS OF THE PUBLIC TRUST.

I JUST WANT TO THANK THEM AND TELL THEM THAT THE VA WILL
BE HERE FOR THEM WHEN THEY COME HOME.

THAT'S OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY GET
THE BENEFITS AND SERVICES THAT THEY'VE EARNED.

End of transcript.